

This message is from the Office of International Services (OIS) and is intended for international students at NC State University in F-1 or J-1 status. It is essential that F and J students read this email thoroughly - international students in a nonimmigrant status other than F or J may find that not all of this information is pertinent.

### **Traveling abroad over the break (F and J visas)**

If you are planning to leave the U.S. over the break and don't have (or no longer have) a valid F-1 or J-1 visa stamp in your passport it is VERY important for you to know the necessary visa procedures and documents you need to obtain in order to re-enter the U.S. You must have a valid (and signed for re-entry) SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019 form from OIS, valid passport, transcript, and financial documents.

### **Obtaining a New Visa**

If you need a new visa, please take these items with you and apply at the US embassy in the country to which you are traveling (preferably your home country) as soon as possible. Check the U.S. embassy or consulate website at which you will be applying to for updated information on visa application procedures and to obtain the Department of State forms DS-156 and DS-157 (only applicable to some applicants). Embassy information can be found at <http://usembassy.state.gov/> Remember - some nationals in some countries can get visas within a day and others may be delayed a long time before getting a visa - please check the embassy website for the country to which you will be traveling. We have received reports that some visa applicants have had to wait as much as 30 or more days after submitting the visa application to the U.S. Embassy for security background checks before they are issued a visa. Even if you are not traveling abroad this holiday, be sure to carry with you (in your wallet?) a photocopy of your passport, visa, I-94, and I-20 or DS-2019 when you travel domestically within the U.S. If you are unable to get a new visa and return to the US by 1/7/2009, please contact Ms. Hanya Redwan ([hanya\\_redwan@ncsu.edu](mailto:hanya_redwan@ncsu.edu)) immediately, since you may not be able to re-enter the U.S. in time for classes and SEVIS registration. If you are subject to special registration, you must depart and enter the US from designated port of entry. More information is available at <http://www.ice.gov/pi/specialregistration/>

### **Automatic Visa Revalidation - Contiguous Territory Rule**

Most non-immigrants can travel to Canada, Mexico, or one of the adjacent islands to the US for a period of fewer than 30 days, even if your visa stamp is expired or you changed status since last entering the US. Retain your I-94 card or approval notice and show it when you re-enter the US. This provision is NOT available to individuals who apply for any US visa in one of these countries (regardless of whether or NOT you obtain the visa) or who are from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, or Syria. We generally do NOT recommend that international students or scholars go to a contiguous country rather than the home country for the purpose of getting a visa since it is possible that you will go there and get stuck and have to return directly to your home country.

### **Additional Resources:**

US-VISIT: [http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial\\_0333.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0333.xml)

Visas: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

NSEERS: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/specialregistration/>

### **OIS / NSCU Closings**

The entire NC State University campus, including OIS, will be closed beginning on Wednesday, December 24, 2008 and will reopen on Monday, January 5, 2009. No University offices, departments, or services will be open or operational. Please make sure that you coordinate and conduct any and all University business -- including items related to your program completion, I-20 extensions, travel signatures, etc. -- well in advance of the University closing. **Keep in mind that any document requests submitted to OIS take 5 business days to process.** Please further note that although OIS will reopen on Monday, January 5, 2009, much of the OIS staff will be hosting new student orientation so no appointment will be

available. Walk-in hours from 2:00-3:00 PM will be held.

### **PROGRAM EXTENSIONS**

If your I-20 or DS-2019 is expiring at the end of this semester, you must submit a completed Program Extension Form as soon as possible: <http://www.ncsu.edu/oisss/pdf/ProgExtenAdvisForm2008.pdf> You will also need to show sufficient funding for yourself, any dependent family members, etc., for one academic year or whatever time is needed to complete your program, whichever is less.

**Keep in mind that any document requests submitted to OIS take 5 business days to process.**

### **CHANGE IN CURRICULUM / CHANGE IN LEVEL**

If you are changing curriculum and/or level of study, and if your I-20 or DS-2019 is expiring at the end of this semester, you must submit a completed Change in Curriculum / Change in Level Form as soon as possible: <http://www.ncsu.edu/oisss/pdf/CIC-COCAdvisForm2008.pdf> You will also need to show sufficient funding for yourself, any dependent family members, etc., for one academic year or whatever time is needed to complete your program, whichever is less. **Keep in mind that any document requests submitted to OIS take 5 business days to process.**

### **INTER-SESSION EMPLOYMENT, OPT, and COMPLETIONS: IMPORTANT NOTE**

If you are in lawful F-1 or J-1 status, your visa certificate from OIS is valid, you will enroll next semester at NC State to continue your current program, etc., it is permissible for you to work more than 20 hours/week on-campus (no maximum) between 12/18/2008 and 1/6/2009). Effective 1-7-2009, you must drop back down to a maximum of 20 hours/week. If you complete your program, graduate, stop enrolling full-time at NC State, violate your status, transfer out, change your status, allow your passport or visa certificate to expire, etc., then you must stop working as soon as the first of these events/conditions occur. This means that appointments must be terminated and you must stop employment when you graduate or are no longer enrolled in classes - even if your contract is for longer. If a graduate student has a thesis accepted/approved by the Graduate School thesis editor before classes begin and opts for the exception to enrollment, then employment eligibility ceases. Students who have completed their program cannot resume any on-campus employment unless/until they have new employment eligibility, such as a valid EAD for OPT or an H-1B (for a professional on-campus position) or have been issued a new I-20 for a change of level or curriculum (in order to resume student on-campus employment). If you will be graduating soon, please be sure you apply for OPT or Academic Training BEFORE you complete your program. The timing of program completion, employment authorization, and visa certificate extension can be complicated - please speak with an OIS advisor before taking action if there is any doubt about what you should do.

### **REDUCED COURSE LOAD**

International Students on a student visa (F-1 or J-1) are required - as part of their maintenance of their lawful nonimmigrant status requirements - to make normal academic progress AND to enroll as a full-time student each semester of their program (with very few exceptions). Summer enrollment is optional unless it is the first semester of enrollment (for which admission was granted), final semester, or otherwise required by the Graduate School. Full-time enrollment at NC State is usually 9 credit hours or more each semester for Graduate Students (and a minimum of 12 credits per semester for Undergraduate Students), but certain exceptions may apply. For a definition of full-time enrollment for Graduate Students, please contact your Director of Graduate Programs and/or the Graduate School website (<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/grad/>). Office of International Services (OIS) advisors do not define full-time enrollment, do not give advice on course placement or credit hours, and do not grant exceptions to university policies or federal requirements. Any F-1 or J-1 student who drops below full-time status without *prior* approval from OIS and authorization in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System

(SEVIS) will be considered to have not met the full-time requirement – which means that OIS is required by law to terminate the student's record in SEVIS. This will result in an immediate loss of lawful status and employment benefits as well as other possible consequences. A student may be eligible for a one semester reduced course load (RCL) under certain conditions (if the student is in his/her final semester, is medically unable to maintain a full-time course load, or is having difficulty during the *first* semester of enrollment due to improper course placement or unfamiliarity with the US educational system.) Graduate students who wish to apply for a reduced course load must complete and return the RCL form to OIS in person during a ***scheduled appointment*** with an OIS advisor. Graduate students must obtain approval for a final semester RCL from their DGP, Chair (if thesis), and the Graduate School Dean before the first day of classes (Spring 2009: January 7, 2009 – First Day of Classes). This full-time requirement does NOT apply to students who are Permanent Residents of the US or in a nonimmigrant visa category other than F-1 or J-1. An RCL authorized for a final semester (which shortens the Program End Date to that semester) cannot be extended. There is no mechanism for OIS to "un-do" an RCL authorization in the SEVIS system or to do a program extension after an RCL is approved. You MUST complete your program by the end of the semester – do NOT do an RCL for final semester unless you are certain you will finish/submit on time. The RCL form is available at <http://www.ncsu.edu/oisss/pdf/rcl.pdf>.

### **TUITION AND FEES**

If you have registered for Spring 2009, payment for your tuition and fees are due to the Cashier's Office ([www.fis.ncsu.edu/cashier](http://www.fis.ncsu.edu/cashier)) on 12-10-2008. If you have a question about your account or payment, please contact the Cashier's Office at [Studentaccounts@ncsu.edu](mailto:Studentaccounts@ncsu.edu). **OIS does not handle student accounts.** Please read the Cashier's website about payment methods.

### **SEVIS REGISTRATION, COURSE ENROLLMENT, and ADDRESS UPDATES**

OIS is required to enroll, or "register" all F-1 and J-1 students and scholars in SEVIS each semester. At the close of late course registration ("Census Day" or the tenth day of classes), all F-1 and J-1 students must either be registered for a full course load or be completed with their programs and engaged in OPT or Academic Training. If you will be returning permanently to your home country upon completion of program, do not forget to submit a Departure Form to OIS. <http://www.ncsu.edu/oisss/pdf/depart.pdf>

Be sure you are registered full-time and that you have updated your local address in MyPack Portal (your street address here in Raleigh) so we can let the SEVIS system know that you are complying with your enrollment and address requirements. If you are not registered full-time (or doing post-completion OPT or waiting for your EAD or engaged in J-1 Academic Training), or if your local address is not correct, or if you are not here, then we are required to terminate your SEVIS record, which means you cannot work and other negative consequences will follow.

Congratulations on your successful completion of this semester. Take care if you travel. Best wishes to those who are moving on. Happy Holidays.

The OIS Staff